



Smithsonian

National Museum of the American Indian

John M. Cooper photograph collection

Emily Moazami

2024

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Museum of the American Indian
Title:	John M. Cooper photograph collection
Date:	circa 1916-1926
Identifier:	NMAI.AC.168
Creator:	Cooper, John M. (John Montgomery), 1881-1949 (Photographer)
Extent:	177 Photographs
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection contains 88 photographs and 89 copy negatives depicting Wet'suwet'en (Babine Carrier) and Attikamekw (Tete De Boule Cree) communities in Québec and British Columbia, Canada and the Yagua (Yahua) community in South America, circa 1916-1926. The photographs were shot by priest and anthropologist John Montgomery Cooper.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Gift of John M. Cooper, 1926.

Related Materials

The Smithsonian National Anthropological Archives holds Father John Montgomery Cooper notes collection (collection ID: NAA.XXXX.0308)

The Special Collections of the University Libraries at The Catholic University of America also holds the John Montgomery Cooper Papers and John Montgomery Cooper and Regina Flannery Herzfeld field notes.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Emily Moazami, Head Archivist, 2024.

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); John M. Cooper photograph collection, NMAI.AC.168; National Museum of the American Indian Archives Center, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

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Biographical / Historical

[Biographical note from the John Montgomery Cooper And Regina Flannery Herzfeld Ethnographic Field Notes Collection at Catholic University of America]

Born in Rockville, Maryland in 1881, to James Joseph and Emma Lillie Tolou Cooper, John Montgomery Cooper distinguished himself as a professor, administrator, theologian, and anthropologist. He was ordained in 1905, named domestic prelate in 1940, and died in 1949.

In 1897, Cooper enrolled in Saint Charles College in Ellicott City, Maryland, to begin his studies for the priesthood. Two years later, he attended the North American College in Rome, where he completed his Ph.D. in 1902 and his Doctorate of Sacred Theology in 1905. While in Europe Cooper developed an interest in archaeology. While assistant pastor of Saint Matthews in Washington between 1905 and 1918, Cooper worked with anthropologists at the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution. By 1914 he had published his first anthropological study, "Analytical and Critical Bibliography of the Tribes of Tierra del Fuego".

Cooper's intellectual range and organizational abilities attracted the attention of John Burke and members of the Catholic University faculty. From 1909, Cooper taught courses in Sacred Theology at CUA. Between 1918 and 1920, Cooper worked as both director of camp and community activities and Secretary of the Committee on Women's Activities for the National Catholic War Council.

After completing his work with the NCWC, CUA invited him to teach in the Department of Sacred Theology. In 1923, Cooper began also to teach in the Department of Sociology where he introduced anthropology to the curriculum. Cooper's anthropological studies shaped his religion courses, and the religious practices of non-literate peoples increasingly informed the content of his theology and religion courses. Ultimately, Cooper led the establishment of the Department of Religious Education in 1929, the first to grant graduate degrees in religion, which he chaired until 1938.

By the mid-1920s, Cooper decided to focus his energies on anthropology. In 1926, he founded the Catholic Anthropological Conference (CAC) to promote anthropology among Catholic missionaries who, in turn collected ethnological objects for him. He edited its publications including the serial, "Primitive Man", and special reports. Two years later, CUA recognized the importance of Cooper's work by establishing the Department of Anthropology and appointing him Professor and Chair. Between 1925 and 1940, Cooper took 13 field trips to study the Native peoples of northern Ontario, Canada. During this time, Cooper developed an especially close collaboration with his student-turned-colleague, Regina Flannery Herzfeld. After suffering a heart attack in 1941, Cooper discontinued his field studies and dedicated himself to the Department of Anthropology, which he chaired until his death in 1949.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains 88 photographs and 89 copy negatives that were shot by priest and anthropologist John Montgomery Cooper in Québec and British Columbia, Canada circa 1916-1926.

The photographs depict the Wet'suwet'en (Babine Carrier) communities in Babine Village, Skeena River, and Moricetown in British Columbia; and the Attikamekw (Tete De Boule Cree) [Weymontachie Band, Saint Maurice River, Quebec] community in Québec. Scenes include portraits of people and environments, as well as activities such as fishing and canoeing.

One photograph in this collection also depicts a woman [Yagua (Yahua)] making pottery near the border of Colombia, Peru, and Brazil.

Content warning

Please note that the language and terminology used in this collection reflects the context and culture of the time of its creation, and may include culturally sensitive information. As a historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

Arrangement

Arranged by catalog number.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Atikamekw [Wemotaci]
- Wet'suwet'en (Babine Carrier)
- Yagua (Yahua)

Cultures:

- Atikamekw [Wemotaci]
- Wet'suwet'en (Babine Carrier)
- Yagua (Yahua)

Container Listing

Series 1: British Columbia, Canada, circa 1916-1926

74 Photographs

[Image\(s\)](#)

Scope and Catalog numbers: N36125-N36161, P07998-P08034

Contents: This series contains 74 photographs depicting the Wet'suwet'en (Babine Carrier) communities in Babine Village, Skeena River, and Moricetown in British Columbia, Canada. The photographs were shot by priest and anthropologist John M. Cooper, circa 1916-1925.

The photographs include depictions of portraits; canoeing, fishing, and drying fish; village scenes; and totem poles, among other scenes.

Culture: Wet'suwet'en (Babine Carrier)

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Series 2: Québec, Canada, circa 1916-1926

102 Photographs

[Image\(s\)](#)

Scope and Catalog numbers: N36162-N36165, N36167-N36213, P08035-P08085

Contents: This series contains 102 photographs depicting the Attikamekw (Tete De Boule Cree) [Weymontachie Band, Saint Maurice River, Quebec] community in Québec, Canada. The photographs were taken by priest and anthropologist John M. Cooper circa 1916-1926.

The images include portraits of individuals and groups, as well as scenes such as fishing and curing hides.

Culture: Atikamekw [Wemotaci]

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Series 3: South America, circa 1916-1926

1 Negatives (photographic)

Scope and Catalog number: N36166

Contents: This series contains 1 negative depicting a woman [Yagua (Yahua)] making pottery near the border of Colombia, Peru, and Brazil. Photographed by priest and anthropologist John M. Cooper circa 1916-1926.

Culture: Yagua (Yahua)

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